

Message Text

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SUBJ: U.S. LATIN AMERICAN MILITARY RELATIONS STUDY: GUATEMALA

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THE FOLLOWING RESPONSES ARE KEYED TO REFTEL QUESTIONS:

A. IN OUR VIEW THE US HAS NO VITAL DEFENSE INTERESTS IN GUATEMALA OTHER THAN THOSE ASSOCIATED WITH OUR OVERALL STRATEGIC CONCERNS IN THE CENTRAL AMERICAN ISTHMUS(SEE GUATEMALA PARM REVIEW, STATE 021779). THE ENVIRONMENT OF RECENT YEARS THEREFORE MAKES IT MORE DIFFICULT THAN IN THE PAST TO JUSTIFY A U.S. MILITARY PRESENCE IN TERMS OF VALID MILITARY REQUIREMENTS RELATING CLEARLY TO US DEFENSE NEEDS. BUT, AS THE MILITARY ARE NOW AND WILL LIKELY REMAIN A DECISIVE POLITICAL FORCE IN GUATEMALA FOR SOME TIME TO COME, OUR SECURITY ASSISTANCE POSTURE WILL CONTINUE TO COLOR GOG ATTITUDES TOWARDS US IN THE FULL SPECTRUM OF OUR BILATERAL RELATIONS.

UP TO NOW, OUR ASSISTANCE PROGRAMS HAVE GIVEN US ACCESS TO LOCAL DECISION MAKERS AND SEVERAL GENERATIONS OF GUATEMALAN OFFICERS. THE INTANGIBLE GOOD WILL THUS DEVELOPED WILL NECESSARILY DISSIPATE TO THE EXTENT THESE TIES LOOSEN. AN EDGE OF BITTERNESS AND DISILLUSION ACCOMPANIES AND AGGRAVATES THIS PROCESS, NOT
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LEAST BECAUSE OF A SENSE OF US RETREAT AND BETRAYAL -- A PERCEPTION THAT THE US HAS UNILATERALLY RENOUNCED THE SPIRIT IF NOT THE LETTER OF THE RIO TREATY AND THE 1955 MUTUAL DEFENSE AGREEMENT WHICH, AFTER ALL, GREW OUT OF US INITIATIVES. ILLUSTRATIVE OF THIS ATTITUDE IS THE SUGGESTION WE HAVE HEARD AT HIGH LEVELS THAT BECAUSE OF GUATEMALAN COOPERATION IN THE BAY OF PIGS EPISODE, THE US BEARS SOME RESPONSIBILITY FOR GUATEMALA'S INTERNAL SECURITY

PROBLEMS AND THE PERCEIVED POTENTIAL FOR CUBAN INROADS (PERHAPS VIA BELIZE) IN THE FUTURE.

THIS IS NOT TO SAY THAT REASONABLY GOOD RELATIONS -- LESS WARM AND RESPONSIVE THAN IN THE PAST -- ARE NOT POSSIBLE. MOREOVER, TO THE EXTENT THAT THE ATTENUATION OF OUR MILITARY TIES IS PART OF A LATIN AMERICAN AND GLOBAL PHENOMENA, IT WILL BE EASIER TO SWALLOW AND HAVE LESS LOCAL IMPACT. THERE ARE ENOUGH STRONG RECIPROCAL TIES WITH GUATEMALA IN NON-MILITARY AREAS TO PREMISE GOOD IF NOT CORDIAL RELATIONS WITH ANY MODERATE GUATEMALAN GOVERNMENT.

B. US RELATIONS WITH THE GUATEMALA MILITARY HAVE SUFFERED AS A RESULT OF VARIOUS RESTRICTIONS AFFECTING MILITARY SALES, AND THE SLUGGISHNESS OF OUR DECISION-MAKING PROCESS ON SALES. THERE EXISTS A WIDE-SPREAD, IF ERRONEOUS, BELIEF AMONG GUATEMALAN OFFICERS THAT THE US HAS LEVIED AN "EMBARGO" ON ARMS SALES TO GUATEMALA AS A RESULT OF THE BELIZE AND HUMAN RIGHTS ISSUES. THE LAUGERUD ADMINISTRATION, FOR REASONS BOTH MATERIAL AND SYMBOLIC, PLACES HIGH IMPORTANCE ON OUR MILITARY RELATIONSHIP. THIS IS CERTAIN TO REMAIN THE CASE WHICHEVER OF THE THREE MILITARY CANDIDATES SUCCEEDS LUAGERUD AS PRESIDENT THIS YEAR.

C. APPROVAL OF THE PURCHASE REQUEST FOR F-5'S WOULD GO A LONG WAY TOWARDS RESTORING NORMAL RELATIONSHIPS AND A GREATER SENSE OF AFFINITY THAN NOW EXISTS. A FAVORABLE DECISION, WE UNDERSTAND, IS UNLIKELY, HOWEVER. US WILLINGNESS TO SELL LESSER ITEMS AND
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EXPEDITIOUS PROCESSING OF FUTURE REQUESTS WOULD HELP CUT OUR LOSSES. BUT WE MAY HAVE TO RESIGN OURSELVES TO COOLER RELATIONS WITH THE GUATEMALAN MILITARY THAN HAS BEEN TRADITIONAL. TO THE EXTENT OUR TIES WITH THE MILITARY OVER THE YEARS HAVE GIVEN US AN IMAGE OF TOO CLOSE ASSOCIATION WITH CONSERVATIVE GOVERNMENTS, THIS IS NOT NECESSARILY AN UNMIXED EVIL OVER THE LONG HAUL.

D. IF OUR ARMS SALES POLICY FORCES GUATEMALA TO THIRD COUNTRY SELLERS OF MAJOR WEAPONS, THERE IS LITTLE TO PREVENT A CORRESPONDING REDUCTION IN OUR INFLUENCE VIA MILITARY CHANNELS. IT IS WELL TO RECALL THAT THE DOWNTURN IN US RELATIONS WITH GUATEMALA DATES NOT FROM THE ONSET OF THE HUMAN RIGHTS CAMPAIGN BUT FROM THE C-47/"PEACE MAYA"/ EPISODE IN 1974-75. NEVERTHELESS, THE GOG STILL RELIES ON US FOR SPARE PARTS FOR EXISTING INVENTORY; HAS HOPES OF MAINTAINING SUPPLY LINKAGES FOR OTHER MILITARY ITEMS (WE REMAIN THE PREFERRED SOURCE OF SUPPLY FOR MOST ARTICLES) AND FOR TRAINING OPPORTUNITIES (PARTICULARLY PILOT TRAINING); AND DOES APPARENTLY VALUE, FOR THE SAKE BOTH OF SYMBOLISM AND THE ADVICE WE ARE IN A POSITION TO OFFER, EVEN THE CURRENTLY REDUCED PRESENCE OF OUR MILITARY MISSION. IT IS NOT REALISTIC TO EXPECT THAT THE GUATEMALAN MILITARY WILL COURT OUR ADVICE WITH RESPECT TO THIRD COUNTRY ACQUISITIONS, KNOWING IN ADVANCE OF OUR POLICY COMMITMENT TO

RESTRAIN WORLDWIDE COMMERCE IN ARMS. IN ANY CASE OUR MILGP MEMBERS, CAUGHT BETWEEN OUR POLICY INTERESTS ON THE ONE HAND AND THEIR PROFESSIONAL INTEGRITY ON THE OTHER, WOULD FIND THEMSELVES IN AN UNTENABLE POSITION.

3. PERSONNEL EXHCNAGE PROGRAMS CAN NEVER SERVE US INTERESTS AS EFFECTIVELY AND AT AS HIGH A LEVEL AS MILGP COMMANDER WITH A PLAUSIBLE SECURITY ASSISTANCE PROGRAM TO ADMINISTER. GUATEMALAN ATTENDANCE AT US SCHOOLS IS STILL A GOOD BEHICLE FOR DEVELOPING LONG-LASTING "PRO US" ATTITUDES, BUT GUATEMALA MAY FIND FMS COSTS PROHIBITIVE. (PRESIDENT LAUGERUD'S ATTENDANCE AT THREE US ADVANCED MILITARY TRAINING COURSES IS PROBABLY A FACTOR IN HIS WARMTH AND ACCESSIBILITY TO THE US IN TJIMES OF STRAIN; THE SAME CANNOT BE SAID OF THE MINISTER OF
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DEFENSE OR THE ARMY CHIEF OF STAFF, NEITHER OF WHOM HAS RECEIVED EXTENSIVE US TRAINING.) WHETEHR IMET WILL CONTINUE TO BE HUNG UP IN THE INTERPLAY BETWEEN OUR HUMAN RIGHTS REPORTING REQUIREMENTS AND GUATEMALAN SELF-RIGHTEOUSNESS REMAINS TO BE SEEN. BUT RESUMPTION OF IMET WOULD HELP RECOUP SOME LOST GROUND.

F. IF REFUSED PURCHASES BY THE US, GENERALLY THE PREFERRED SUPPLIER THE TREND TO THIRD COUNTRY SUPPLIERS WILL NECESSARILY ACCELERATE. WE REGARD AS BLUSTER PUBLIC GUATEMALAN THREATS TO TURN TO COMMUNIST COUNTRY SUPPLIERS IF NECESSARY TO ACQUIRE ARMS FOR THE DEFENSE OF GUATEMALAN INTERESTS IN BELIZE, BUT SUCH STATEMENTS ARE AN EARNEST OF THE GOG'S INTENTION TO LOOK ELSEWHERE EVEN IF IT MEANS HIGHER COST AND LESS INITIAL CONFIDENCE IN THE MERCHANDISE, SERVICING, AND SPARE PARTS PIPELINE. THE PRESS REPORTED IN DEC 1977 THAT THE DEFENSE MINISTRY'S BUDGET FOR CALENDAR YEAR 1978 CONTEMPLATES OUTLAYS OF \$6.6 MILLION TOWARD THE PURCHASE OF MILITARY MATERIEL. THE BULK OF THIS IS LIKELY TO GO TO THIRD COUNTRY SUPPLIERS. BOSTER

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